

# Language, Education, and Success: A View of Emerging Beliefs and Strategies in the Southeastern United States

June 2005 — Volume 9, Number 1

## Language, Education, and Success: A View of Emerging Beliefs and Strategies in the Southeastern United States

Miguel Mantero

<mmantero@bamaed.ua.edu>

The University of Alabama

### Abstract

This research investigates the beliefs and self-reported practices of teachers in an elementary school in the Southeastern United States, where the English Language Learner (ELL) population has grown significantly over the past ten years. The findings describe and clarify mainstream teachers' beliefs regarding the academic preparation of ELLs, as well as their interaction with the students' families and the institution's ELL teacher. Suggestions are offered as to how classroom teachers and language educators can work together to strengthen their relationships, and improve the academic achievement of the elementary school English Language Learner.

### Introduction

The 2000 Census (US Census Bureau) found that 53.6 percent of Alabama's foreign-born population had arrived in the state since 1990. The 2000 Census also recorded 87,772 foreign-born residents in the Alabama: this was an increase of 44,239 residents since the 1990 Census. If we add the 2003 estimate of undocumented immigrants in the state by the Immigration and Naturalization Services (24,000 individuals), then the total foreign-born population rises well above 110,000. This dramatic change in Alabama's demographic profile is visible in the schools around the state. According to the 2002 Alabama census, ELL enrollment in k-12 public schools grew 367 % from 1991-1992 to 2001-2002 (and 168% from 1998-1999 to 2001-2002). Given the large growth of the ELL student population, teachers need to learn how to interact with ELLs and their families, as well as how to prepare them to succeed in U.S. society.

Given the above information, the purpose of this investigation is to study the beliefs and self-reported practices of elementary school teachers, where the schools' English language learner (ELL) population has grown in the past ten years.

The questions that guide this study are:

1. What do mainstream teachers believe are the needs (academic and social) of ELLs and their families? What type of interaction do the teachers have with the students' families?
2. What kind of professional relationship do the mainstream teachers have with the district's ESL teachers?
3. Are the mainstream teachers familiar with strategies or activities that afford the ELLs opportunities to learn English, master content

area material, and integrate themselves into the community?

### *Language, Education, and Success*

Within the various activity settings in which we participate throughout our lives, we are afforded opportunities to negotiate the meaning of concepts, words, and goals with others; this assists learning and cognitive development. Classrooms that operate within this sociocultural framework view language as a tool that allows for cognitive development (Mantero, 2002), and this, in turn may assist the process of second language acquisition in a formal, instructional setting. This approach assists students in becoming successful second language learners and contributing members of their communities (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

Successful students and their families help sustain, transform, and build communities. Wells (1999) sees this as the collaborative purpose of public education:

*(As) newcomers become progressively more able to engage in solving the problems that the community faces, they may contribute to a transformation of the practices and artifacts that are employed, and this, in turn, transforms the community's relationship with the larger social and material environment. (p. 242)*

Wells's statement reflects Dewey's (1938) observation that individuals learn by taking part in activity. And, as explained above, activity is mediated by language. However, success isn't easily defined, but a clearer understanding emerges if we investigate its foundation: *appropriation* and *participation*. Appropriating linguistic and cultural artifacts and tools occurs in three stages (Vygotsky, 1978; Leontiev, 1977; Wells, 1999), which can be summarized as:

- *Cognitive adjustments*: Individuals realize that the community and contexts in which they live are very different from their past experiences. This allows learners to begin to interpret their surroundings differently.
- *Tools or artifacts are transformed*: Individuals transform language or objects according to their own experiences and use them to meet their own needs in the community.
- *Transforming surroundings*: As individuals interact with others, they have an impact on any ensuing activity. This is based participants' interpretation and negotiation of the tools or artifacts involved in communication. This also transforms the community's practices and perceptions regarding the language, communicative activity, or artifacts used during interaction.

Rogoff (1990), Lave and Wenger (1991), and Lafont (1999) consolidate the above view of appropriation under the semiotic nature of learning or semiotic apprenticeship. These researchers explain that in order for individuals to interact successfully with a community, they must collaborate with others by relying on language and becoming aware of the common understanding and shared meaning that underlie goal-directed action. In essence, the successful education of an individual is demonstrated by being able to appropriate and transform distributed knowledge during social activity.

The concept of student success often depends on the view of literacy that the teacher holds in the classroom. If a teacher operates within a receptive or strategic paradigm, then student success can be understood as being *monochronic* in nature. Monochronic success is based on *a priori* views of language and literacy, in which the knowledge of rules of grammar and language production skills (reading and writing) allow individual students to reach isolated, pseudo-communicative goals such as ordering from a menu or reading directions (Luria, 1981; Richards & Lockhart, 2000). Literacy within monochronic classrooms is inherently limited because "attaining literacy" (in this case) depends on the individual's ability to memorize and mimic established patterns of language interaction so that the pre-determined goals are reached without group negotiation or construction of meaning (Hall, 1984).

Classrooms that operate within a sociocultural view of literacy permit teachers to approach success as *polychronic* in nature, that is, supported by emergent inquiry. This involves taking part in tasks and activities that incorporate the sociocultural, linguistic, and interactional aspects of literacy in various settings (Hargreaves, 1994). Crucial to the concept of polychronic success is that activity between the classroom and the community must be coordinated. This coordination permits students to understand the importance of attaining social cohesion as they put the language and skills that they learned in their classrooms to use. Basically, a polychronic view of success means that literacy is not solely dependent on form, and it is necessary to include pragmatic and semantic aspects of language and

language use during classroom instruction.

*Language as Social Activity*

The present view of language borrows from Vygotsky’s (1978) and Halliday’s (1978, 1993) perspectives. Essentially, language permits us to explain mental function and affords us the opportunities to mediate, organize, and alter our lives in our communities. Generally speaking, a central purpose of language is to help co-construct knowledge, discourse, and activity within particular societies in an effort to educate its members. Both scholars support the notion that language and its ensuing meaning is learned as we interact in society. We also learn how to manipulate our surroundings and the social experiences of those close to us as we learn language (Garcia, 2002). Speakers (and learners) of any language have to be able to balance the social aspects of language activity with the more personal creation of language. This can be accomplished by its using prescribed conventions with invented forms (*i.e.*, spelling, pronunciation, usage, etc.) that allow language to change over time as we engage in meaningful discourses within our communities.

Meaningful discourse permits those involved to develop their knowledge of language and language use as well as the comprehension of information associated presented during interactions (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). Arguably, one of the reasons that schools exist is for students to acquire new knowledge. Those that interact in “instructional settings” in traditional academic environments or alternative educational contexts must contend with the reality that meaning in discourse has to be agreed upon if the participants are to accomplish their goal(s). Rommetviet (1979) and Halliday (1978) underlined the importance of speakers agreeing on the meaning potential of language within a given social situation if they were to build new knowledge and accomplish their goal(s).

Furthermore, as Leontiev (1977) states, the motive that underlies activity is almost as important as the understood goal. In order to accomplish goals individuals must be able to mediate and structure activity during goal-directed action. Therefore, the present investigation is framed by these sociocultural constructs because approaching education as reliant on motive, activity and goal allows us to investigate educational beliefs and practices.

*Emerging Beliefs and Adjusting Strategies: Broadlumber Elementary School*

Broadlumber Elementary School (a pseudonym) is located in the northwest Alabama and is part of a school system that serves a city of about 165,000 inhabitants and a district that serves 16,466 students. Of the seniors in the school district about 50% are college-bound. The school has 347 k-5th grade students: 50% white, 45% African American, and 5% Hispanic. There are 17 classroom teachers and one administrator.

The school system to which Broadlumber Elementary School (BES) belongs spends about \$ 5,700 U.S. per student in the system (Alabama State Board of Education School Report Card for 2001-2002). When compared to the average spending per student in the rest of the state, BES’s system is average, receiving a grade of ‘C’. However when it is compared to the national average, its grade is below average (‘D’).

BES administers the Stanford Achievement Test [1] (SAT) to their students in the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades each year. Table 1, 2002 SAT Scores for Broadlumber Elementary, summarizes the results in the areas of Reading, Language, and Math for 3rd and 4th grades, and Reading and Science for the 5th grade. The national average for the 2002 SAT, 9th Edition is 50 (Alabama State Board of Education School Report Card for 2001-2002). The letter grades are BES performance compared to the rest of the nation.

Grade 3	Reading	D+
	Language	C
	Math	D
Grade 4	Reading	D+
	Language	C+
	Math	D

<b>Grade 5</b>	Reading	C
	Science	C

*Table 1: 2002 SAT Scores for Broadlumber Elementary*

The average score of BES students in all grades and areas assessed is ‘C’ when compared to the rest of the U.S. [2] All of the ESL students in BES are Hispanic. The SAT report for 2002 also presents averages based on ethnicity, using the terms Black, Hispanic, and White.

According to the SAT report, the Hispanic students’ average score in BES’s system was 48, not far below the national average of 50 for all students. The white students’ average score in BES’s system was 60, and the Black students’ average score was 36. However, further investigation and data from the Alabama State Department of Education reveals the following information for ESL students in BES:

- The 3rd grade ELL SAT average in Reading is approximately 33, and their average Math score is 27.
- 4th grade ELLs scored an average of 48 on the Language section of the SAT, an average of 34 on the Math section, and an average of 29 on the Reading section.
- 5th grade ELL average scores on the SAT are: 43 on the Reading section and 40 on the Science section.

Given the above data, the ELLs in BES are scoring below average on academic achievement compared to their counterparts across the school system and the nation.

Achievement on standardized tests cannot relate directly to the level of linguistic proficiency or communicative competence in English of ELLs. However, since we are in the initial stages of building the professional development school, this information is valuable because it provides us information on academic achievement and performance on standardized tests in English. It also establishes a baseline to refer to in the coming years.

BES’s school system comprises 29 schools: 16 elementary, 7 middle, 5 high schools, and one regional learning center. There are two certified-ESL teachers employed by the system in charge of serving the 29 institutions. These teachers are responsible for the assessment, placement, and supervision of the ESL students as well as general community interaction and individual school support. The school system employs some tutors and translators to help on an as-needed basis. The ESL teachers provide a yearly ESL-specific workshop mainstream teachers in their system.

### *Data Analysis*

The principal investigator of this study is the contact faculty member for ESL-related issues at BES. The relationship with BES is still in the earliest stages. Only one year has passed since the investigator has made initial contact with the school. The main purpose of this initial survey was to gain insights into teachers’ interactions with ELL’s families and their ESL teachers. Also, given the SAT achievement data above, it was of interest to see if the teachers reported any strategies or approaches that they used while teaching ELLs. Finally, we wanted to see if the classroom teachers reported any ideas or beliefs regarding ELL involvement in the community outside of school. The results of this survey will be shared with the schools’ teachers, the systems’ ESL teachers, and any interested parties at the university in hopes of strengthening the goals, purposes, and relationships. This will help us understand how teachers help their students become successful in school and in their community.

### *Initial Survey*

Qualitative research lends itself well to being able to identify patterns in education and any ensuing reactions that are brought about by population growth or change (Carspecken, 1996). This research design will allow for the findings and conclusions to be triangulated based on the following data: the Broadlumber Elementary School surveys, the observations from the intensive ESL summer program, and further analysis and reflections from an external investigator who is familiar with Broadlumber Elementary and the ESL summer program as well

as the extensive field notes from the site. Above all, qualitative analysis allows us to view education as an emergent and complex process (Guba, 1978).

After meeting with all of the teachers and the administrator of Broadlumber Elementary School, a survey (see Appendix) was designed that would provide assistance that best fit the needs of the students, teachers, and surrounding community. This meeting and survey helped complete the first part of this study. The survey consists of 12 items that address various issues of teaching ELLs, building relationships with their families, and professional interaction with the school's ESL teacher. All 17 of the teachers completed the survey and the responses from the surveys were then compiled and analyzed.

### *Analysis of Teachers' Responses*

The following is supported by the analysis of the teachers' replies on the surveys and the self-study of the intensive ESL summer program. To begin with, I offer responses to the three initial research questions:

*1) What do mainstream school teachers believe are the needs (academic and social) of English language learners and their families? What type of interaction do the teachers have with the students' families?*

The data supports that the one "language skill" that the teachers at Broadlumber Elementary School believe is crucial to academic success is reading. Ten out of the 17 teachers stated this in their responses. However, only 3 of the 17 teachers mentioned using any teaching strategies that were directly related to reading, stating:

- "We find the easiest books in the library and begin reading by using picture clues. We focus on basic sight words and numbers with concrete examples."
- "Many of the strategies I use for struggling readers are ideal for ESL students: specific phonics instructions, vocabulary, and reading comprehension strategies."
- "Picture clues, Spanish books, peer tutoring with other ESL [students] as well as non-ESL (students), repetition, eye contact, [and] modeling."

The concern for improving reading skills without any evidence of knowing how to improve these skills may have stemmed from the fact that the teachers were aware that the reading scores of all of their students on the 2002 SAT were 3rd grade: D+, 4th grade: D+, and 5th grade: C. This fact, coupled with other responses to items #6 and #10 (strategies and methods) in the survey, is interesting given the context and rationale of the study. For example, some teachers offered the following statements in response to items #6 or #10:

- "Luckily, I have not encountered any ESL students who were not fluent in English. I am aware of their LEPs and accommodate accordingly."
- "Students are fluent. Therefore, I have not needed specific strategies."
- "None in particular, except to hope that there might be another, more proficient ESL student who can help a less proficient child."
- "The method I most try to remember is that I treat the child just like any other English speaking student and not try to over-accommodate."
- "No [I haven't met with other teachers to discuss methods]. All my students have had the needed English skills to function fairly well."

The above responses are representative of the overall confusion and lack of knowledge about:

- The terminology used while discussing ESL students (the term "LEP" was not introduced or used during this investigation).
- The concept of fluency, second language learning, and language acquisition, and general lack of knowledge about how to teach ESL students.

However, eight of the teachers did make reference to using materials in Spanish in their lessons, and the school does have some items around the school labeled in Spanish and English (window, door, etc.) in an effort to make the ESL students feel more comfortable. In retrospect though, the remarks by the teachers may, in part, explain the ESL students' below-average scores on the 2002 SAT. This aspect will be elaborated on later in this study.

The teachers' responses to item #3 (*"On average, how many ESL students have you taught since you began working at BES?"*) ranged from 1 student to 15. According to the instructors' responses, kindergarten and first grade (on the average) have the highest average number of ESL students. Interestingly, the kindergarten teachers at BES have about 25 years of teaching experience each, and seem to be the most frustrated about how to teach ESL students. However, the individuals with least amount of teaching experience (a 3rd grade teacher, 1 year; and a 5th grade teacher, 2 years) are the most optimistic and proactive in their attitudes towards the children. One can infer that a teacher's particular stance on how successful she or he is with a student may then transfer over to the students' feelings of accomplishment, development, and achievement in and out of the school.

According to their responses, the teachers also believe that being able to write well in English is a crucial skill for students. One teacher mentioned this in response to item #7 (*"If you had to focus on one, which language skill (Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking) do you believe your students need the most to be academically successful? Why do you believe this?"*) and five teachers stated that they would like to see their students improve their writing (in and of itself) in response to item #8 (*"Besides learning English, is there any other school-related skill or academic proficiency that you would like to see your students improve?"*). There were several teachers who did not offer a response to item #8, and two instructors stated that they would like for the ELLs to improve their math skills. Only one teacher mentioned anything outside of the school setting that they believed would help support academic success. This teacher noted that "[It is] important to be continually enlarging their schema of their world around them."

The responses to item #9 (*"Describe your relationship with the parents/guardians of ESL students. How much contact do you have with their parents/guardians in or out of school? Do they ever contact you?"*) and item #12 (*"How often do you meet with the student's ESL / TESOL teacher?"*) offered some valuable insights into the relationship that the teachers have with the parents and guardians of the ESL students. Since support from children's parents or guardians is crucial for the success of any student in school and their surrounding community, the district's ESL teachers are charged with, in part, keeping the families and guardians directly connected to the school by visiting them at home, providing translators when needed, and making sure that parents and guardians of the children are aware of the school's immunization policies. In essence, the two ESL teachers that work with BES (and 28 other schools in the district) perform extensive duties as "pseudo-social workers" as well as any professional duties that fall within typical ESL guidelines (providing workshop opportunities, entry and exit assessments, and the like).

The following are representative responses to item #9 in the survey: *"Describe your relationship with the parents/guardians of ESL students. How much contact do you have with their parents/guardians in or out of school? Do they ever contact you?"*

- "There is very little contact with parents. Usually they sign the necessary forms sent home. They don't seem to be concerned with their child's progress."
- "I usually do not have much contact directly with parents. Our ESL teacher usually delivers field trip permission forms and other important forms to the students' homes. One time we had a translator come in during a conference about hygiene. It is very difficult when you call the home and they can't understand you."
- "In the past, relationships with parents [were] minimal. The language barrier was to blame, I think. The parents seemed to be very caring about their child, but were unable to communicate."
- "It varies. Some come by the school to ask questions. Others do not respond at all."
- "None."
- "Depends on the family. More often than not, the parents have very little contact with the school. They usually do not have phones in their homes or a car to drive to the school."
- "Very few contacts. The parents of ESL students seem more trusting of teachers and hold the teacher in a position of esteem."
- "Usually the parents are very involved with their children's education. This year the two students I have, I have not had contact with parents at all. The parents do not speak English."
- "Very little contact of any kind. One initial meeting on the day child comes for first time to my class. In most cases, no contact. Why? They can't read my notes, and I can't speak on the telephone."
- "Great! Weekly folders are signed by parents. Phone calls and conferences are used as needed. They always brought someone with them to translate."
- "Positive/good terms/can call if any problems arise/welcoming. Minimal contact. They have visited my classroom just for an update."

Almost every teacher stated that he or she had little or no contact with the parents or guardians of the ESL students. And, not surprisingly, the instructors said this was because of the parent or guardian's inability to communicate in English. Realistically, one should not expect more contact with the parents or guardians of students just because English is their child's second language. But, if we look back to the



scores on the 2002 SAT, we see many reasons to strengthen the relationships between the school and the community. Only two teachers described their interaction with the students' parents as good or positive.

In order to understand the frequency and type of contact with the district's ESL professionals it was necessary to include item #12 in the initial survey: *"How often do you meet with the student's ESL/TESOL teacher?"* The following are representative responses from the teachers at BES:

- "A few times a year."
- "As needed. We touch base when we see each other also."
- "Seldom. We use e-mail, if needed."
- "Weekly conversations in the hall."
- "Except when they come to take the child out of class or speak to me about (the student's) behavior, never."

Six of the teachers stated that they "never, seldom, or very rarely" met with the ESL teacher, and the rest of the instructors' responses varied from "monthly" to "once or twice a year." According to the responses from the BES faculty, the only time that they could count on seeing the ESL teacher is when she came to take the student from class for ESL-related services. But, during this time, the classroom instructor was involved in the day-to-day teaching of his or her class and could not meet for a substantial amount of time with the ESL educator.

Given the responses to item #12, the second general research question of this study:

2) "What kind of professional relationship do the teachers have with the district's ESL teachers?"

has been initially addressed. However, we will return to the implications of this professional relationship later in the investigation.

The last research question:

3) Are the mainstream teachers familiar with strategies or activities that afford the ELLs opportunities to learn English, master content area material, and integrate themselves into the community?

was included in this study because becoming successful members of a community (for all students) entails being able to use English for classroom success and for meaningful activity in the community.

According to the teachers' responses, they have knowledge of ESL-related strategies only when it involves the teaching of reading to second language learners. Although there was some concern for success outside of the classroom (two teachers expressed this) the responses to items #6, #8, and #10 did not reveal knowledge of strategies, methods, or activities that would be used to assist the student and his or her family in integrating themselves into the community.

As part of the overall purpose and goal for building the professional development site relationship, we included item #11 in the survey: *"Specifically, what would you like to know about teaching and interacting with ESL students and their families?"* The responses from the teachers reflect their awareness for including the families of the children in the education process and school activities:

- "How to communicate with parents. How much progress should we expect from these students?"
- "More resources for successful parent conferences."
- "Any assessments that are done by [the ESL teachers] should be shared with the teacher, along with suggestions to help with any weak areas, especially language tests."
- "How to facilitate more partnerships between school and home."
- "I would like to have access to common phrases, words, etc., needed to correspond in Spanish when sending notes, etc."
- "I need to know some Spanish to communicate with the families better. At a workshop in the past, I did learn more about their culture. This was helpful."

“How to get information to parents so that they can respond to letters/notes sent home routinely.”

- “I would like to know if the ESL student’s parents understand the info. I send home.”
- “How to communicate with the family about reading, returning lost books, probably more mundane stuff.”
- “Parents’ needs and concerns and goals for their children.”

It is evident from these replies that the teachers at BES would like to improve the frequency and type of interaction that they have with the families of the ELLs. Knowledge of basic or conversation Spanish is also seen as important to building a bridge between school activities and the community by the BES teachers. One method of addressing this need is discussed later in the study and includes the Spanish outreach community program.

## *Discussion and Implications*

Throughout this investigation, an understanding of elementary school teacher’s self-reported beliefs and strategies in regards to teaching and interacting with ESL students has been provided. Analysis of the teacher’s responses supports the conclusion that there is very limited interaction between the teachers at BES and the district’s ESL teachers. In part, the reason for this may be that there are only two ESL teachers responsible for the 29 schools in the system. And, as a result of lack of a funding for education in general, there are no plans to hire more ESL teachers. This may have repercussions in the quality and quantity of ELL support offered by BES’s system, and in particular, by the school itself. But, we cannot say that the current situation at BES is only because of a lack of funding for qualified ESL professionals.

As demonstrated by the teachers’ responses, school personnel need to become aware of the “real life” needs of the students and their families in this area of Alabama. Most of the instructors at BES have been teaching for 10 or more years. During this time, the student population has not only grown but changed dramatically. It would benefit the teachers to begin to see the ESL children as a permanent part of their community.

The data indicates that the teachers at BES are in the first phase of the three-stage process that leads to successful participation within a community that was mentioned earlier: *cognitive adjustments*. That is to say, the teachers at BES as having to learn how to work together in order transform their school and teach the incoming ELLs. Doing this also influences change in their communities.

Since this study is investigating teachers’ beliefs and self-reported practices, it is essential to note that in a school setting that activity, motive, and any strategies or methods are often defined by a teacher’s frame of mind. If the teachers had reported more strategy used while teaching ELLs, then it could be inferred that they were within the second phase of the process: *transforming tools*. As noted before, the BES teachers’ main concern is reading, but they do not offer substantial strategies as how to approach the teaching of reading to second language learners. From this, we are able to infer that reading, and perhaps literacy in general, is for academic purposes, monochronic success (doing well on the end of the year SAT exam, for example).

Secondly, the teachers, administration, and support staff at BES would benefit from workshops and training sessions about how to teach and initially interact with ELLs and their families. We include the administration and the school’s support staff because the children look to them for guidance on social issues as well as direction on how to behave appropriately in a U.S. school. One goal of the seminars would be to have everyone view the ELLs and their families as members of the community with real-life needs that includes the learning of English, but consists of so much more.

Many of the teachers at BES responded that they use Spanish materials in their lessons. Although it is evident from the teachers’ responses that they use these materials so that the students are able to transfer knowledge from their first language to English, over-reliance on Spanish-language texts may not provide the students enough opportunities to be engaged in any ensuing activities in English with their classmates. Also, unless a teacher has a Spanish edition of the material that the rest of the class is using in English, the ESL students may be set apart from the rest of the class to focus on the Spanish texts while the teacher teaches the rest of the “English-speaking” class. Since the majority of the teachers expressed an interest in learning Spanish to help the ESL students, it follows that the teachers may not know enough Spanish to teach with Spanish materials and construct appropriate activities and lessons for the ESL student. According to the data, there is only one teacher (first grade) that has limited proficiency in Spanish.

However, the teachers did express a need for learning Spanish in order to communicate with the families and guardians of ELLs. Given this, it is suggested that the administration implement conversational Spanish lessons for teachers in the school. These Spanish lessons would focus on the needs of the teachers and would take place after school twice a week. Basically, this is a “Spanish for the community” course to be taught within an emergent paradigm so that teacher’s needs can be directly addressed.



There has to be more support from the district's ESL professionals. Even if they are over-extended, a clearer plan of action is needed. For example, the ESL teachers may want to have regularly scheduled times to meet with the classroom teachers, and perhaps have a binder or folder of information that is readily available to the teachers about strategies for teaching many different skills and areas in relation to ELLs. In essence, we are advocating restructuring the way teachers approach their classrooms and students.

If we return to Wells's thoughts on schooling and the emergence of desired activity, it is necessary to underline the conclusion that purely language-focused and teacher-centered lessons do not allow for students become engaged in activities that will build the language and social skills needed in their communities. It is also recommended that BES teachers begin to frame desired activity outside of the academic context. This will support the cognitive, academic, and linguistic development of the emerging and growing population of ELLs in the school and in the United States.

## Notes

[1] More information about the Stanford Achievement Test can be found at its publisher's website: <http://harcourtassessment.com>.

[2] It is interesting to note that BES's school system receives less funding than other school systems in the nation (on the average), and the BES students are "average." This causes one to consider the possible effects on student learning and achievement if the school system were to match per student funding to that of the national average.

## References

Alabama State Board of Education School Report Card (2001-2002). Available online:

[http://www.alsde.edu/AllReportCards/01\\_Annual\\_Report.pdf](http://www.alsde.edu/AllReportCards/01_Annual_Report.pdf)

Alabama State Board of Education School Report Card (2001-2002). Available online:

[http://www.alsde.edu/AllReportCards/01\\_Annual\\_Report.pdf](http://www.alsde.edu/AllReportCards/01_Annual_Report.pdf)

Carspecken, P.F. (1996). *Critical ethnography in educational research: A theoretical and practical guide*. New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. (New York: Collier Macmillan).

Garcia, E. (2002). *Student cultural diversity: Understanding and meeting the challenge*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Hall, J.R. (1984). Temporality, social action, and the problem of quantification in historical analysis. *Historical Methods*, 17, 208-216.

Hargreaves, A. (1994). *Changing teachers, changing times: Teachers' work and culture in the postmodern age*. London: Cassell.

Halliday, M. A. K. (1978). *Language as social semiotic: The social interpretation of language and meaning*. London: Arnold.

Lafont, C. (1999). *The linguistic turn in hermeneutic philosophy*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Lave, J., and Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Leontiev, A.N. (1977). *Activity and consciousness*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.

Luria, A.R. (1981). *Language and cognition*. New York: Wiley Publishing.

Mantero, M. (2002). *The reasons we speak: Cognition and discourse in the second language classroom*. Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey.

Richards, J.C. & Lockhart, C. (2000). *Reflective teaching in second language classrooms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rogoff, B. (1990). *Apprenticeship in thinking: Cognitive development in social context*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Rommetviet, R. (1979). On the architecture of intersubjectivity. In Rommetviet & Blakar (Eds), *Studies of language, thought and verbal communication* (pp. 93-108). London: Academic Press.

Tharp, R.G. & Gallimore, R. (1988). *Rousing minds to life: Teaching, learning, and schooling in social context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

U.S. Census Bureau (2000). Available online: <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/>

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wells, G. (1999). *Dialogic inquiry: Toward a sociocultural practice and theory of education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## About the Author

**Miguel Mantero** is Assistant Professor of Foreign Language and English and as a Second Language Education in the Second Language Acquisition and Teaching program in the College of Education at the University of Alabama. He is the author of the book *The Reasons We Speak: Cognition and Discourse in the Second Language Classroom* (Bergin & Garvey Publishing, 2002). His work has appeared in such journals as *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, *Foreign Language Annals*, and the *Journal of Educational Thought*. He is currently completing a book on discourse and identity in second language education to be published in 2006.

## Appendix

### Initial BES-PDS Survey

#### **Thank you for your responses!**

1. Teacher of Grade level : \_\_\_\_\_
2. Number of years teaching in K-12 settings: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Number of years teaching elementary school: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Number of English as a second language students (ESL) currently in your classroom: \_\_\_\_\_
5. On average, how many ESL students have you taught since you began working at BES ? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What specific strategies do you use or have you used to assist ESL students?
7. If you had to focus on one, which language skill (Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking) do you believe your students need the most to be academically successful? Why do you believe this?
8. Besides learning English, is there any other school-related skill or academic proficiency that you would like to see your students improve?
9. Describe your relationship with the parents / guardians of ESL students. How much contact do you have with their parents / guardians in or out of school? Do they ever contact you?
10. Have you ever met with other regular classroom teachers to discuss effective methods of teaching ESL students at BES outside of scheduled faculty meetings? If so, which method(s) did you discuss and what happened when you implemented it / them?
11. Specifically, what would like to know about teaching and interacting with ESL students and their families?
12. How often do you meet with the student's ESL / TESOL teacher?

© Copyright rests with authors. Please cite TESL-EJ appropriately.

**Editor's Note:** The HTML version contains no page numbers. use the [PDF version](#) of this article for citations.

